INNOCENCY cleared: The Liberties and Priviledges of Gods People for assembling together in his Fear to wait upon him, very calmly expostulated; and their Refusal of all Oaths, in meekness vindicated.

1. That there was a golden time for Holiness of life and good Government before Moses had a being upon earth, or writ his Book; there's none that are truly wise can well be so bold as to deny without a Blush.

2. That the Rise of all outward Government was occasioned by the Peoples declining from that of God in them, and so running into carnal liberty, lust, and profane licentiousness, is a Truth which cannot be shaken.

3. That the end of all external Government, was, and is, to Bridle the Wicked, to be a Terror to Evil-doers, the Preservation of the People in Peace and Tranquility, and a Protection, Praise and Encouragement of those who do well: where true Wisdom rules, will not be contradicted.

THese three Particulars being granted me, Come, let us reason together in Meekness and Moderation, O ye Children of Men that are now in Authority, and tell me what it was that induced men to live in the fear of the Lord, and peaceably one with another before the Reins of Political Government, or the Rod of that Authority had its Institution, or the Bible had a being, if it was not a Principle of God, or a measure of himself in every Mortal which inwardly led him to be obedient to his Maker?

The children of Men in that golden age of the World, living the life of Innocency and true Holiness, needed not then an outward Law to restrain them from Vice or Vanity; were (by the inward Law of God written in their hearts, and by their Love and Obedience thereunto) a Law unto themselves.

Lust was mortified, and was not suffered to live in them; and therefore could not lord it over them: *Covetousness* had not crept into their hearts, each man lived comfortably upon the Creation, and was contented with his Portion, no man sought then to lord it over one another, every man sought after the good of his Fellow-Creature as his own; while this inward Voice or Law of God was regarded by them, all Lording Tyranny was a stranger to them.

But after *Lust* entred into the hearts of men and prevailed over them; that they would be no longer kept within the pale of this holy Principle, Gods Spirit in their hearts, which sounded forth the Will and Mind of God, unto them, which was there placed to be their Law

and Law-giver, whom they were to obey in all things: Then God raised up himself an outward Instrument, and gave him Wisdom and Power to govern his People, and to make Lawes and Statutes for them, which they were not to transgress, but be subject to; and this Government was intended and set up for a Restraint to the wilde Nature to make it tame, and bring it under the Yoak, subject to just Authority, to deal justly, and uprightly one with another, and to live peaceably in their generation, and inoffensively to all men, and to be a Bridle to that licentious, bruitish, profane spirit, which would rise up against, persecute and worry Gods innocent people: And so this Authority proved an incouragement unto, and a protection (under God) of Gods harmless Flock.

Now let Gods witness arise in all your consciences, and in meekness, without prejudice ponder the proceedings of the present Authority against the innocent suffering people, scornfully called *Quakers*, and compare the Principle and Practices of these persecuted people with that which I have above premised, and see if this Authority do rightly answer the end of the Primitive Institution of Government in its persecuting of this innocent people: And honestly consider, how often have we published to the world, That we truly own the righteous Law of God written in our hearts, His Light in our consciences to be our Leader, our Law-giver, the Line or Rule of our life, that holy Seed which never sinned, but ever suffered by the seed of evil-doers, because it ever bare its testimony in the heart of man against all iniquity, do we believe in and obey; which suffered without the Gates of *Jerusalem*, and witnessed a good confession before *Pontius Pilate*, Christ *in us the hope of Glory*: In him we do believe, who moveth in our hearts to Holiness, Patience, Mercy, Meekness, Peace with all men, and love to Enemies, and leadeth his Lambs into all Truth; whose Kingdom is not of this world, and therefore with a carnal Weapon cannot we his Subjects (nor ever could since we were in our mindes and affections separated from the World, and turned to God) fight for the upholding of it. How often have we been taxed for a seditious and traiterous people? and yet none of this trumpery never could, nor ever shall be justly proved against us. How many false aspersions have been cast upon us, as if we had been Conspirators against the Peace of the Kingdom? How often have the wicked people invented Lies against us, and some foolish people been afraid of us, as if we would have risen, and their Throats should have been cut by us? And all this by that subtile spirit which seeks to murther and destroy us; and yet how often hath the Lord cleared the innocency of us? Yea, hath not the King and his Council (how unde-

servedly God knows) proclaimed us for Plotters, and numbred us amongst Conspirators, though in their Consciences Gods righteous Witness hath before this day born testimony to our innocency herein?

I say, Consider Friends, Hath our deportment amongst you deserved no better than this hard measure from you, to be thus unworthily imprisoned by you? Yea, how many of us in several places of the Nation have upon this Proclamation been knockt down and sorely wounded by the seed of evil-doers? Have not all the clamours and loud out-cryes of our Enemies vanished like smoak? And doth not our innocency appear to all sober people? Have we ever given you any just cause to be jealous of us, or that you should give so little credit to us? Wherein have we so heinously offended you, that we should be thus unkindly dealt with by you? What's our offence? **Is Innocency become a Crime?** Is it because we cannot bow unto you, nor with flattering Titles complement you, but deal plainly with you, and for your vanity, in love reprove you? Doth this render us so vile in your eyes? Then verily we must be more vile still.

You who have bad dealings with us, have you ever found *Treachery* in us, or met with *falshood* from us, that you should judge so uncharitably of us? If Gods witness in you give a good testimony for us, be not you bitter in your minds towards us, nor so fill'd with *Passion* and *Prejudice* against us, but let Bowels of love be in you for us; and for the time to come be not so backward or unwilling to have a good opinion of us, nor so ready to receive lying Reports that shall be rais'd against us; if we were of the World, the World would love us, for the World loves its own; but we are not of the World, therefore the World hates us.

If we have lived peaceably amongst you, and walked inoffensively towards you, why should we be so deprived of our Priviledges by you? Have we forfeited our Liberties, Lives, and Estates by Treachery against you, or by any aversness to the Peace and Prosperity of our Countrey? Convince us of error before you thus unreasonably condemn us. Have we not as good right and priviledge to assemble together in the fear of the Lord in our own hired Houses, there to wait upon and worship the living God, as you have to resort unto the House of *Rimmon*? May the wilde and the wanton meet by hundreds, if not thousands, together in your *Steeple-houses*, and must the little harmless Flock be shut up in a *Pinfold*, and caged up in a Prison, and not meet above three or four together? How comes this to passe? Come, shew us our Crime, *if you can*; or deal more candidly with us, *if you cannot*: for we have neither lost our Understanding, nor forfeited our Freedom; though Man seek to imbondage us, yet the Beast must not

In Gods eternal Light we see our Duty, Right and Priviledge to assemble together to worship our God, *Heb.* 10. 25. and know full well what that is which seeks to hinder us, and would kill the breathing Seed of Eternity to *Time* and *Place*; and we are not afraid to publish this unto you the Sons and Daughters of *Moderation*, that as the old Dragon who seeks to devour the Seed of *Innocency* both in you and us, if the Power of the Lord should not restrain him: But our Trust and Confidence is in the living God, who can put a Hook in the Nostrils of this *Leviathan*, and shoot the Arrows of his Wrath into the Bowels of him, and wound the Head of the Wicked, as it pleaseth him.

But if our God do suffer that dark seed, which hath now dominion, to make further shipwrack of their Consciences, and still to oppresse his Innocent People, in the strength of our God we shall encounter him, and without Sword or Spear, or any carnal weapon, in *patience* conquer and overcome him; for we have learn'd to give our backs unto the smiter, our goods to the spoyler, and our cheeks to him that plucketh off the hair, until we have finished the Testimony which our God shall give unto us for his Truth; for we may not betray that which God hath committed to us, nor seek to make our Peace with Man, by sinning against God. Could we *temporize* as others do, Prisons then could not be our Portion: We cannot bow to the Will of Man, where it commands what is contrary to our God.

Is it lawful for the *wild Bruits*, *Drunkards*, *Whoremongers*, *Idolaters*, *Swearers*, and all sorts of prophane people, to repair by thousands to your *Steeple-houses*, and may not the Sons of *Innocency*, Gods harmless Flock, meet together in the fear of the Lord, in their own *hired houses* above three or four in number, but such snares must be spread for their feet? Doth this advance the Honour of your King, thus to favour the *Brats of Babylon*, and discountenance the *Children of Sion*? doth not the All-seeing Eye discern all the crooked windings of his Enemy? Will he not arise in his fury, and fall upon his Adversaries, if they go on in persecuting his People? Can they make resistance against him? Are they able to give battel to him? did ever any strive thus against him, that were not broken and confounded by him?

Alas, poor men, how I pitty you! How easie is it with the Lord to overturn your Mountain, and in a moment bring it to a Mole-hill? Your breath is in your nostrils, glory not therefore in the strength of *Egypt*, nor proceed no further in your fury against Gods People; for it will but aggravate your Condemnation in the Day of the Lord, and make his Judgments fall more heavily upon you when he comes to reckon with you: Have you not sins enow besides to answer for, sufficiently able (without true Repentance) to sink you into the pit of

endless perdition, but you must needs pull down a greater weight of Gods wrath upon you? Ah! how doth my Soul lament and pity you, when I foresee and consider the flood of Misery which is coming upon you! Then the pleading of your Loyalty to *Cæsar* (now used as a cloak for your inveterate wrath and enmity to Gods harmless Seed) cannot save you, nor all your smoothness and subtilty divert or bear off the stroak of Gods Justice upon you; Nor your swallowing in hypocrisie and fear, the *Oath of Allegiance*, which is done by many of you, adde one Mite of true Comfort to you, but be a greater weight upon you, where it is taken contrary to that of God within you.

And now a few words to you that are so wrathful against us, because your vain Oaths are denyed by us: Vain Oaths indeed may they well be termed by me; for our Yea and Nay is sufficiently binding to us, *and whatsoever Man requireth of us more than these, cometh of evil.*

Search the Scriptures, for they testifie of that Truth which here shall be declared unto you; Christ Jesus the Lip of Truth, in his Sermon upon the Mount, *Matth.* 5. bids the People *they should not think that he came to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill*, And that *except their Righteousness exceeded the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* You have heard, said he, *that it was said by them of old*, Thou shalt not kill, and *whosoever shall* kill, *shall be in danger of Judgment*: Christ came not to destroy this Law, which in its time and place was good, which the Pharisees owned; but now he comes nearer to them, telling them, as before, Except your Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, (who observed this Law, *Thou shalt not kill*) you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; *For I say unto you* (saith Christ) Whosoever is angry with his Brother without a cause (Mark, this is lesse than bodily Murder) shall be in danger of the Judgment. Lo, thus Christ came not to destroy the Law, but in the bond of Love to perform or fulfil it, and so forbad all Anger without a cause, from whence the Murder hath its beginning; So Christ here layes his Ax to *the root of the Tree*, and plainly intimates unto them, the Scribes and Pharisees kept to the Law, *Thou shalt not kill*; but they who would be Christians, or Christs Disciples must come nearer to him, and *not be angry without a cause*, and so *exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, or *else they could not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.* And so he goes on in several other things, as in that other Commandment, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*, Christ came not to destroy this Law, but to fulfil it, and lay a stricter Command upon the soul than the actual committing of lust; *But I say unto you* (saith Christ) *whosoever looks upon a woman to lust after her, he hath al-*

ready committed adultery with her in his heart, & so they were to exceed the righteousnes of the Scribes and Pharisees (who kept to the Commandment *Thou shalt not commit adultery*) or else *they could not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, whilst they looked upon a woman to lust after her.*

Thus the Spirit of Christ gives not any liberty to lust, nor toleration to prophane wanton minds or seared consciences; but calls for Holiness of life, to walk in the strait and narrow Gate, which is the Path to everlasting Peace. You have heard, saith he, that it hath been said by them of old time, *Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.* This the Scribes and Pharisees might reach unto, and live in the obedience to this Law. *But I say unto you* saith Christ, (*Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, whom he doth not accuse that they swore falsly, as many now ordinarily do, *you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, and therefore) **Swear not at all.**

Come let us Reason together and expostulate a little about this matter: Will it be counted a Crime if in true wisdom I rightly weigh these words of Christ, & paraphrase a little upon his Divine Precept. Christ doth not here only comand the people to avoid **all vain Oaths** in their *idle talk and communication*, which I do not read nor believe the Scribes and Pharisees *were guilty of*, but rather judge they were herein (as in many other things) above an hundred shame unto many thousands in the Nation who would be counted Christians; but he mounts up to a higher pitch, and with his Rod of Authority reacheth to the Scribes and Pharisees, amongst whom (under the Law it might be lawful (for the ending of all controversies) they living in the nature where strife and contention had dominion) to give in their testimony upon Oath, and so to swear in truth and righteousnes. To such it was said by them of old, *Thou shalt not forswear thy self*. Now Christ he cometh not to destroy the testimony of Truth, but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets; and so tells the people in another place, **Strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way which leadeth unto life**: And here he adds, **Except your Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees**, who not being truly come to Christ, lived under the Law, and so under the Administration that in Order for the ending of strife, and so were not to forswear themselves, except they came to the end of all Oaths, & to let their **Yea be Yea, and their Nay Nay in all things**, they *could not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: And therefore saith Christ, **Swear not at all.** Lo this is the Royal Mandate of *Sions* King, and do not all his Subjects owe Allegiance and true subjection unto him? **Let your Yea be Yea** (saith he) **and your Nay Nay in all things**, *for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

In all things? Then certainly in giving in Evidence and Testimony be it like man and man, and in promising obedience to all the lawful Commands of Authority.

For whatsoever is more than these (*YEA* and *NAY*) **cometh of evil.** *Saist thou so Lord, and shall not we be concluded by thee? Let my Tongue cleave to the Roof of my mouth, if I ever further dispute it with thee: O Lord I do herein believe thee, and submit unto thee: Henceforth O Lord through thy assistance to me, all Oaths shall be denyed for ever by me; both before Authority, and in my familiar Talk. O blessed Lord, O thou Immaculate Lamb of God without spot or wrinkle, the true Israelite indeed in whom there was never found guile: hast thou set forth thy Royal Pleasure in the Scriptures of Truth, and published thy Proclamation to all thy Subjects which prohibiteth* **all Swearing**, *in such express words as were but the dark Generation, or who are wilfully blind can justly plead ignorance that read thy words,* **I say unto you, Swear not at all, &c.** *but let your* **Yea, be Yea, and your Nay, Nay, for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil?** *And shall Sions children, thy own Seed be disobedient or rebellious to thee? O be that far from us! How can we love thee if we keep not thy Commandements? Lord we are clearly satisfied in our own souls that thou requirest Obedience from us as to this particular Precept, and do well know as thou hast rightly spoken,* **Whatsoever is more than Yea and Nay cometh of evil.**

Therefore O Lord do we bend unto thee in this thy holy Commandment; for thou art Righteous altogether in all thy Requirings, and thou would'st be justified in thy judging of us; yea, in our own Consciences we should be condemned from thy presence, if (since thou hast convinced us we ought not to Swear at all) we should out of a slavish fear to save self, wilfully violate and transgress thy Royal Law, which thy blessed Apostle James *very earnestly pressed the people to obey,* **Above all things, my Brethren, Swear not &c. lest you fall into Condemnation.** *Yea, Lord, we know many of thy chosen and peculiar people before us, who suffered Martyrdom for thy Truth, have in Obedience unto thy Command kept to thy Doctrine, and denyed to* **Swear at all;** *and must we be counted unworthy to live upon thy Earth (by those who would be counted Christians too) because we dare not transgress thy Righteous Law? Then Lord we will be contented to bear with patience the Wrath and Indignation of thy Enemies: and if our Obedience unto thee render us so vile to thy Adversaries,* Lord let us be more vile still, *and yet obedient unto Englands King, or any other Authority in* **all lawful Commands.** *Thou knowest our Innocency Lord, that we commit no Plot, but desire to live peaceably under Authority, and shall never use outward violence, nor handle a carnal Weapon, nor commence any Con-*

shall our Yea be as binding unto us, as all the Oaths or Bonds of the Heathen unto them. And if the tongue of Men or Angels should seek to insinuate any other Doctrine into us, contrary to this Command of Christ, Yea, not at all, in the fear of the Lord we shall bid defiance to it, and reject it. Let all the Angels in Heaven worship thee.

So in the integrity of our hearts, O Lord, we are given up patiently to suffer what thou shalt suffer the Adversaries of thy Peoples Peace to impose upon us for our Obedience unto thee: Thou knowest Lord we are a harmless peaceable people, and have none to plead our Cause but thee; and Lord we know thou art Allsufficient, thou canst work deliverance for thy suffering Seed as it pleaseth thee; therefore will we put our trust in thee: Thou knowest we desire the peace and welfare of all men, yea, the inward good and outward peace and prosperity of our Enemies: It shall seem good unto thee. Lord open thou their understanding, that they may see whom it is they persecute; bring them O Lord out of Darkness into thy Light, and from the Power of Satan (from whence all Persecution ever rose) *unto thee O God. Do good in thy good time O Lord to all that through ignorance have done wrong to us.* Righteous Father, *Do thou forgive them, for they know not what they do. Bring them Lord to thy righteous Law in their hearts, thy Light in their consciences, thy Immortal Seed, which never sinn'd against thee; that they may cease from their iniquities, and be reconciled unto thee. Lord grant in thy Light they may wait upon thee, that their iniquities may be pardoned by thee. And as for that Mountain of iniquity, which is in rebellion against thee, and boast in its own strength as if it never could be moved, and thirsts for the blood of thy innocent Babes* (God eternal keep them:) *Drive the Flood backward, Rebuke the proud waves of the Sea, and beget a Calm: Be thou O Lord the Defender of thy harmless People, who art the Author of their Faith in thee: Get thy self a glorious Name, and magnifie thy Almighty Power in the utter overthrow of thy implacable Enemies: Shew mercy to all but that which thou hast designed for Perdition: Preserve thy own dear breathing Seed out of the Lions Paw, who have none in Heaven O Lord but thee, nor none in all the Earth we can expect deliverance from but thee: Thou Lord art Allsufficient, we look unto no other: Thou art our Key, thou art our strength, our hope is in thee, our deliverance must come alone from thee: we wholly cast our care upon thee, therefore shall we be saved by thee: Under the shadow of thy Wings Lord we are safe, and all the ravening Beasts of the field cannot make us afraid. Glory, Glory, everlasting Praises from thy Immortal Seed be given unto thee alone, who onely art worthy to be honoured, God over all, Blessed for ever,*

By a Sufferer for Truths sake, in the City-Prison at *Lincoln*.

Lincoln, 18th day, last month, 1660.